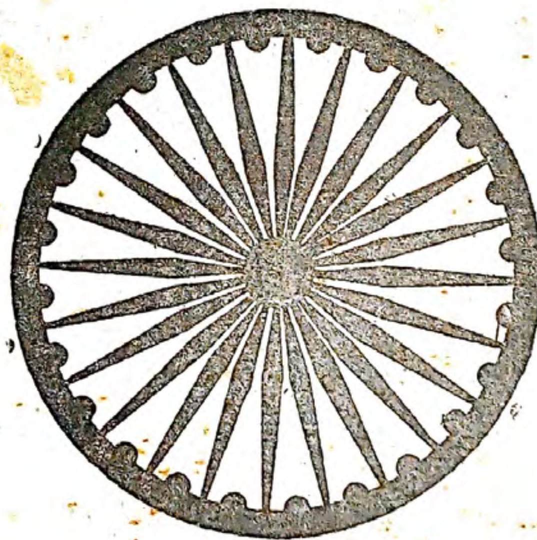
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CANDRAGUPTA-KUMĀRADEVĪ COIN TYPE

BY

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Discussing the Candragupta-Kumāradevī coin type, the late Dr. Altekar observed[1] in his Introduction to the Bayana Hoard Catalogue :—

"The process of Indianisation of the foreign prototype was started from the very beginning ; we have seen already how the Kuṣāṇa peaked head-dress is replaced by a close-fitting cap bordered with pearls in the case of the king. The dress of the queen is entirely Indian ; she wears a graceful *sārī*, probably in the *vikacchā* fashion, an upper garment hanging gracefully over her shoulders and under her arms. Her hair is tied in a knot behind the head, and earings, necklace, armlets and bangles can be clearly seen on her person.

"The object which the king is offering to the queen is unfortunately not very clear. It is a small one, and is sometimes held between the thumb and the forefinger (Pl.1.7-8). This suggests that it was most probably a ring. Sometimes, however, it is shown as clasped by all the fingers, its thick conical head peeing out above the thumb (Pl. 1. 2-4). This object with a conical tip has a fairly long handle on the one coin in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and on another in the Provincial Museum, Lucknow. On our coins Pl. 1. 2-4 it is clear that this long handle is concealed in the finger clasp and only the conical top appears. This object is obviously *sindūradānī* still in use among Hindu ladies of Northern India. In Pl. 1.6, however, the object presented looks like a circular bangle, but it is held rather curiously over the thumb. It is clear that the marriage gift given by the king on the occasion of the matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis is intended to be shown on the obverse. The gift, however, may have consisted of a ring, a bangle, a *sindūradānī*

1. *BHC.* XLIX–L.

and several other ornaments. Different objects were selected for being shown on different dies by the different mint-masters; hence the absence of uniformity in their depiction on our coins".

2. After a careful consideration of relevant details, I had pointed[1] out that the depiction did not indicate that Kumāradevī was receiving a gift from Candragupta; and that it would have been a breach of decorum if she were shown resting her right hand on her waist when an article was being presented to her by no less a person than her own husband, the king. A reference was made to the Cakra-Vikrama coin type of Candragupta II, which showed the king receiving a gift from Viṣṇu, with the position of his hands correctly drawn.

3. If the queen did not receive an article from the king, was the composition meant to show that the king received some thing from the queen? Alternatively, could it be intended that the king and the queen were shown in ordinary conversation the king's holding up an object in front of his mouth being in conformity with the ordinary process of conversation in domestic life?

4. The Sassanian fine arts abound in representations of a couple in conversation. The rock sculpture of Sassanian Persia contains many examples of a king and his queen in conversation, both shown standing. There are also other art pieces of that period showing a couple sitting on a coach.

5. I think that the composition on the coin type was meant to show just that and nothing else, viz. the king and the queen, both standing-talking to each other. But what was the object which was held by two fingers of the right hand of the ring coming together? The late Dr. Altekar thought that it was *sindūradānī*; and further held that the *sindūradānī* was a marriage gift by Candragupta to his bride. He did not explain why, in that event, Kumāradevī was not shown not even in the least being inclined to accept such a precious gift. On the other hand, if the king were not giving anything away to his queen—as is suggested here, but holding an article for his own use, what could that

1. *JBRS.* Vol. XLII. pl. 3-4.

article be ? I think that where it has been shown as being held by a finger and the thumb or two fingers and the thumb and is circular in outline, it was not a ring but a packed up betel leaf, which the king proposed to proceed to put in his mouth. It is well-known that there was special staff appointed in the royal house-hold in ancient India to make this article available at call.

In the *Kuttinimatam* pointed reference has been made to this particular style of holding the *pāna*. The posture of the palm was called *Khatakāmukha*.[1]

6. As has already been noticed, different articles have been shown being held in the right palm of the king. Some are shown as having been clasped between the forefinger and the thumb. This is more likely to be an ordinary flower with a long stem, instead of a *sindūradānī*. Holding a flower in the right hand while indulging in gentle conversation was fashionable not only in the Gupta period but even in later ages. That this was a flower is more clearly appreciated from the unique king and the queen type coin of Kumāra Gupta I, where the flower is distinctly shown.

7. I had suggested that in this case, the king was going on a military expedition—vide his completely military accoutrement. He is bidding farewell to his queen before undertaking an expedition, or *raṇa-yātrā*. It was common on such occasions to accept a betel leaf or a flower or fragrant articles, just as it was customary to offer these articles during a welcome when a person had arrived. Thus, Candragupta was shown as "*grihita-tāmbūla-kuśuma-paṭa-vāsaḥ*."

8. While a departure for a *raṇa-yātrā* was doubtless shown on this piece and accounts for the composition showing the figures of the king and the queen and explains inscribing their names on the reverse, what was responsible for the occurrence of the word "*Licchavayaḥ*", along with these two names ? Why is the whole Licchavī community referred to, instead of any particular person ? It may be that either the king was assisted by that community in that particular campaign or it could also be that

1. *Kuttanimatam*, 758.

somebody else who had reason to refer to all these three parties, viz. the king and the queen and the Licchavīs, had really minted the coin type. As the coin type is based on a later stage in the evolution of the coins of Samudragupta, it is more than likely that Allan was right in holding that the coin type was issued by Samudragupta, who had reason to remember with gratitude his own parents as well as the Licchavīs. As regards the objection that the name of the commemorator was not found on the alleged commemorative type, I had already pointed out that there was another coin type of Samundragupta himself, commemorative in nature, which did not bear his name.

9. That among reasonable alternatives about the object held by the king, it could be assumed that it was a *tāmbūla*, seems also to be supported by the composition of the king and queen coin type issued by Candragupta II. Not only was the king shown to be holding the article in *khatakāmukha* fashion but there is a spittoon pot shown under the couch. (Please see the enlargements of this composition from the specimens of the type available in Bhārat Kala Bhawan—plate attached).

Even the austere Someshavara Suri Deva had remarked—

सततं सेव्यमाने द्वे एव वस्तुनी सुखाय, सरसः स्वैरालापस्ताम्बूलभक्षणं च ॥६०॥





Candragupta-Kumāradevī Coin type.